Chapter 47 The Moon Fairy ①

THE FARTHER AND WIDER A RUMOR SPREADS...
...THE MORE IT DIVERGES FROM THE TRUTH.
AND ON OCCASION, THOSE RUMORS TAKE ON A LIFE OF THEIR OWN.
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT A PEERLESS BEAUTY WHO CRIES TEARS OF PEARL?
I WAS WONDERING WHAT RANDOM THING HE'D HIT ME WITH THIS TIME...
O... KAY...
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IF IT'S A WOMAN OF PEERLESS BEAUTY YOU WANT, SHE'S RIGHT OVER THERE.
HEE HEE!
HEE HEE!
...WHOM THEIR GREAT-GRAND-FATHER ONCE BEHELD.
...TO SEE THE BEAUTY RESEMBLING THE MOON FAIRY OF LEGEND...
APPARENTLY, THE VISITING ENVOY HAS DEMANDED...
I BELIEVE THIS TO BE AN UNREA-SONABLE DEMAND...
SIGH
...BUT THE HEAD MINISTER IN CHARGE OF ENTERTAINING OUR GUESTS WAS ON THE VERGE OF TEARS AS HE IMPLORED ME TO FIND HER.
OF COURSE, THERE'S NO TELLING IF SHE'S EVEN ALIVE TODAY...
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHO SHE MIGHT BE?
SHE WAS SAID TO HAVE LIVED IN THE PLEASURE DISTRICT DECADES AGO.

IS SHE REALLY ?!
OH, SHE'S VERY MUCH ALIVE.
WE HAVE ...?
WHY, YOU'VE BOTH ALREADY MET HER.
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THE PEERLESS BEAUTY WHO CRIES TEARS OF PEARL, RIGHT?
VERDIGRIS
SHE'S THE MADAM OF VERDIGRIS.

.....
SO LONG AS YOU FILL HER POCKETS WITH COIN, I BELIEVE SHE'D JUMP AT THE CHANCE. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO?
...I'M NOT SO SURE THAT WOULD SUIT.
TIME IS CRUEL ...
...AND ITS TOUCH CAN CAUSE EVEN THE MOST PEERLESS BEAUTY TO WITHER AWAY...
WELL ...
...PRESENTING A SHRIVELED OLD PRUNE TO A FOREIGN EMISSARY WHO WISHES TO SEE A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN...
...COULD RISK SETTING OFF A DIPLOMATIC CRISIS.
...TO A MONEY-GRUBBING OLD BIDDY WITH A HEART OF STONE.
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WHAT IF WE ARRANGED FOR MORE SUITABLE ENTER-TAINMENT INSTEAD?
BUT THIS PARTY MUST UNDERSTAND HOW AGING AND THE PASSAGE OF TIME WORKS...
THE EAST AND THE WEST HAVE DIFFERENT IDEALS OF BEAUTY...
...BUT SURELY ALL THE WOMEN PRESENT WOULD'VE BEEN CHOSEN FOR THEIR UNIVERSAL APPEAL.
WE'VE ALREADY THROWN A BANQUET WITH A BEVY OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.
BUT IT WAS NOT TO THE ENVOY'S LIKING.
JUST WHO IS THIS ENVOY ANYWAY ...?
PLEASE FORGIVE THE VULGAR SUGGESTION, BUT WE COULD ARRANGE FOR AN EVENING COMPANION TO COME BY.
THAT WON'T DO.
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THE ENVOY IS A WOMAN, AFTER ALL.
AHA.
HE HAS A FACE THAT WOULD CAPTIVATE ANYONE.
SO THAT'S HOW THIS WOUND UP FALLING INTO JINSHI'S LAP.
AND DESPITE EVERY-THING, HE'S STILL A MAN.
HE HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO DRAW IN A WOMAN AND THEN SOME.

BUT THAT SCENARIO TOO HAS ITS SHARE OF PROB-LEMS.
SERIOUS CONSIDER-ATION MUST BE GIVEN TO THIS EVENTUALITY WITH THIS PARTICULAR EUNUCH INVOLVED.
IF HE ACTUALLY ATTEMPTED TO SEDUCE AND BED THE WOMAN, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WHEN SHE DISCOV-ERED...
?!
...THAT HE WAS MISSING THE REQUIRED EQUIP-MENT?
I DO DOUBT A WOMAN IN HER POSI-TION...
...WOULD BE QUITE SO THOUGHTLESS AND SHALLOW.
BUT BEST NOT TO TEST HER AND FIND OUT...

WHAT IF I TOLD YOU HER COUNTRY HOLDS THE WAYPOINT BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE WEST TRADE ROUTES?
THIS ENVOY... IS SHE THAT IMPORTANT A VISITOR?
AH, I UNDER-STAND.
OUR LAND IS BLESSED WITH COPIOUS RESOURCES, SO MUCH SO THAT OTHER NATIONS WILL GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO GET THEIR HANDS ON THEM...
...SUCH AS PRO-VOKING VARIOUS NOMADIC TRIBES INTO ATTACKING US.
EVEN AS THESE NEW TRADE NEGOTI-ATIONS ENSUE...
...I'M SURE EACH PARTY IS SIZING THE OTHER UP...
...YOU MIGHT SAY.

ON THE OTHER HAND...
...THE ENVOY'S COUNTRY, WHICH HAS LONG AVOIDED COMING UNDER THE THUMB OF ANY OTHERS...
...HAS ITS OWN REASONS FOR ITS ACTIONS, I'M SURE...
...WHETHER THAT BE GREASING A FEW DIPLOMATIC WHEELS OR ADDING TO THEIR MILITARY MIGHT.
EVERY-ONE IS SAID TO BE INCREDIBLY BEAUTIFUL IN THAT DISTANT LAND...
...PROBABLY AS A RESULT OF ALL THE INTERMARRIAGE THAT OCCURS BETWEEN THE LOCALS AND PEOPLE FROM ABROAD.
FOR RUMORS OF THE MOON FAIRY TO HAVE MADE SUCH AN IMPRESSION ON PEOPLE FROM A PLACE LIKE THAT...
.....
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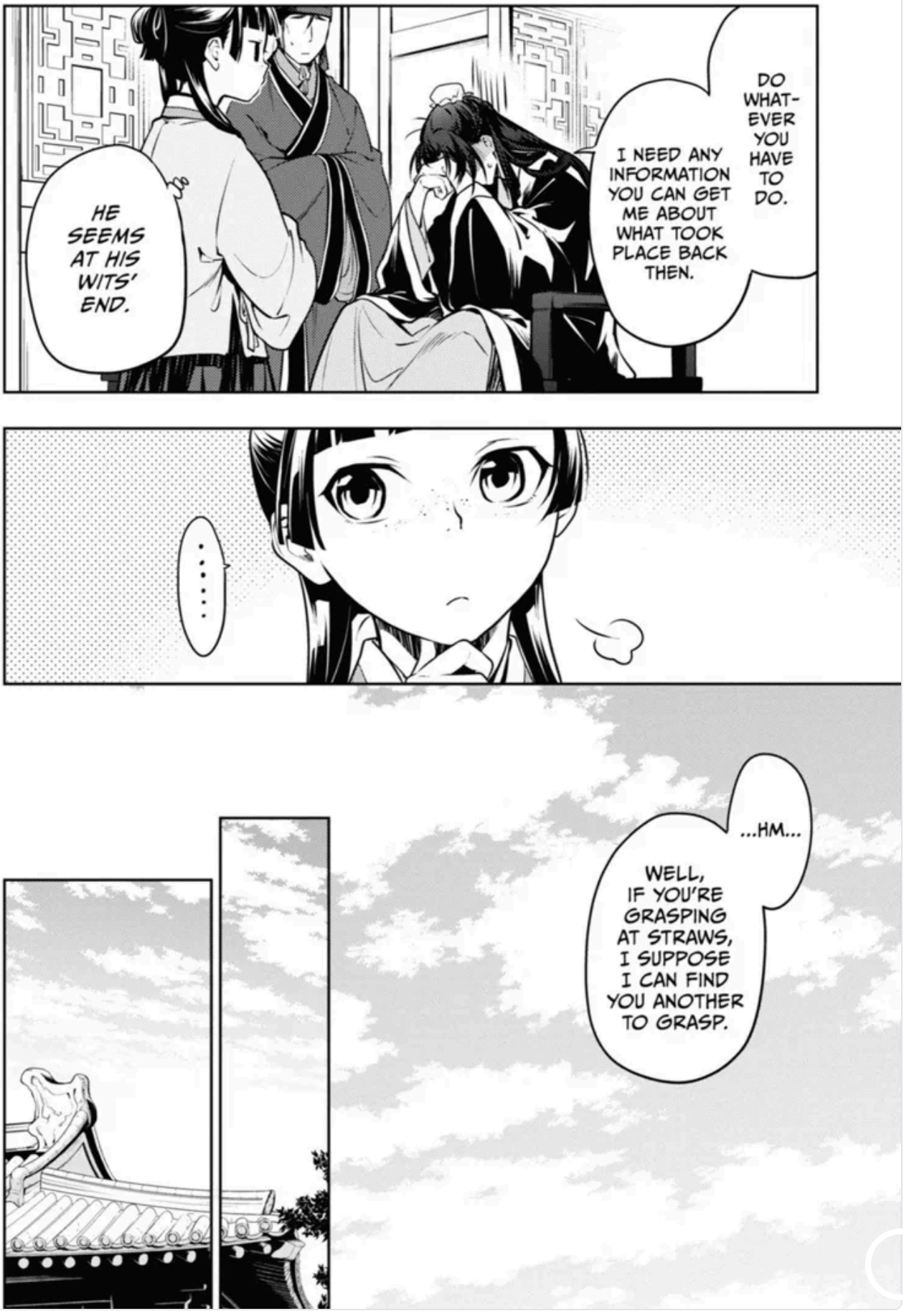
PERHAPS SHE MIXED A HALLUCINOGEN INTO SOME INCENSE?
OH!
...IS THAT SOMETHING YOU'VE DONE BEFORE?
I FEAR WE'D HAVE A DIPLOMATIC CRISIS ON OUR HANDS IF WE DID SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
NO, BUT I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE THE EASIEST THING TO DO.
SHAKE
SHAKE
147


HE SEEMS AT HIS WITS' END.
I NEED ANY INFORMATION YOU CAN GET ME ABOUT WHAT TOOK PLACE BACK THEN.
DO WHAT-EVER YOU HAVE TO DO.
.....
...HM...
WELL, IF YOU'RE GRASPING AT STRAWS, I SUPPOSE I CAN FIND YOU ANOTHER TO GRASP.

WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT?
I HEAR YOU'VE GOT A STRANGE TALE FOR ME.
MADAM OF VERDIGRIS
EVER THE IRREVERENT OLD BIDDY.
HMPH!
NO OUTSIDERS ARE ALLOWED INTO THE INNER COURT, EVEN IF THEY'RE WOMEN.
SO I HAD TO MEET WITH HER IN THE SAME ROOM WHERE I MET LI HAKU.

I DID INDEED.
DID YOU ENTERTAIN A FOREIGN ENVOY ONCE UPON A TIME?
THEY'D ONLY JUST RELOCATED THE CAPITAL AND STILL HADN'T FINISHED BUILDING THEIR FANCY CASTLE YET.
MEANING HE HAD NO PROPER PLACE TO HOST A BANQUET FOR ANY ENVOY.
JABBER
JABBER
MUST BE OVER 50 YEARS AGO NOW, I RECKON.
DURING THE TIME OF THE EMPEROR BEFORE THE LAST ONE.
JABBER
THE EMPEROR WAS IN QUITE A PICKLE...
...AND EVENTUALLY CHOSE THE SITE OF SOME OLD RUINS FOR HIS SHINDIG.
THE BUILDING HAD BEEN BUILT AS A RITUAL HALL OF SOME KIND.
IT WAS LOCATED NEAR AN ORCHARD AND A LOVELY POND.
...THAT REMINDS ME...

LONG AGO, THIS AREA USED TO BE A TOURIST DESTINATION.
THE SPOT HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN HOME TO A PEOPLE WITH AN ADVANCED ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE, IT WAS SAID.
USING THE OUTER WALLS AND UNDER-GROUND PASSAGE-WAYS...
...IT WAS REBUILT OVER THE RUINS INTO WHAT IT IS TODAY.
THE RITUAL SITE I VISITED THE OTHER DAY...
...HAD A WILD GROVE OF FRUIT NEARBY.
THE INNER COURT THEN MUST NOT HAVE BEEN AS LARGE AS IT IS TODAY EITHER.
SO IT WOULDN'T BE TOO ODD IF THE BANQUET LONG AGO...
...HAD BEEN HELD SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE GROUNDS OF THE CURRENT INNER COURT.
THAT'S WHEN I WAS CHOSEN OUT OF ALL THE COURTESANS IN THE PLEASURE DISTRICT...
...TO BE THE LEAD DANCER DURING THE PERFOR-MANCE!

HARD TO IMAGINE SINCE SHE LOOKS MORE LIKE A WITHERED BRANCH THAN A LOVELY BLOSSOM NOW.
I WAS THE TOP COURTESAN IN THE PLEASURE DISTRICT IN THOSE DAYS! WHY ELSE?!
WHY DID THEY PICK YOU?
BUT I S'POSE ...
...THE BIGGEST REASON WAS MY PHYSIQUE.
I WAS TALL AND SHAPELY IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES.
MAKES SENSE.
TO PEOPLE FROM A COUNTRY WHERE INDIVIDUALS TEND TO BE TALLER AND WELL-DEVELOPED ...
...THE ADULTS OF OUR PEOPLE MIGHT LOOK MORE LIKE CHILDREN.

HRMM.
ISN'T THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN TELL ME ABOUT THAT NIGHT?
A TALL AND BUXOM LEADING LADY WOULD'VE SUITED THAT PARTICULAR STAGE BEST.
WELL, SEEING AS IT WAS HELD IN A SORT OF IMPRO-VISED LOCATION ...
...IT TOOK A FAIR WHILE TO GET IT READY.
THEY EVEN WORKED OUT THE WAXING AND WANING OF THE MOON...
...AND MOVED ANYTHING THAT MIGHT OBSCURE THE VIEW FROM THE BANQUET TABLE.
THERE WERE A GREAT MANY INSECTS TOO 'COS THE SITE WAS NEAR AN ORCHARD...
...SO ALL THE LARVAE ON THE LEAVES OF THE TREES WERE EXTERMINATED IN ADVANCE.
MORE FOOL THEM, SINCE THE LIGHT FROM THE TORCHES ATTRACTED MORE BUGS ANYWAY.

SOME-ONE HAD SMEARED DEAD INSECTS ALL OVER IT, YOU SEE.
...I FOUND THAT MY COSTUME HAD BEEN TAMPERED WITH ON THE DAY OF THE BANQUET.
DESPITE ALL THE PREPARA-TION...
GRRR!
MY PERFOR-MANCE WAS HAILED AS GLORIOUS, AND THE WOMEN WHO TRIED TO TEAR ME DOWN WERE BEYOND PEEVED.
SMUG
I HID THE DAMAGE WITH MY SHAWL AND MADE IT WORK.
BUT I WASN'T SO SOFT AS TO LET A PRANK LIKE THAT GET TO ME.

SMACK
YOU INSO-LENT LITTLE STRAY!
I'VE HEARD THAT STORY A BILLION TIMES BEFORE.
YEAH, YEAH.
DON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING NEW TO ADD?

SWISH
HMPH!

WHAT A LOVELY PIC-TURE.
I'VE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE.
THIS MUST BE ONE OF HER PRIZED POSSES-SIONS.
TO THINK THAT THIS BEAUTY RIGHT OUT OF A FAIRY TALE...
...WOULD TURN INTO SUCH A PINCH-FIST...
I WAS TOLD THE FOREIGN ENVOY, AFTER GOING ALL THE WAY HOME...
HEH HEH!
...COMMIS-SIONED AN ARTIST TO PAINT THIS.
IT'S TITLED "THE MOON GODDESS."
OH, I SEE.
SO THEY BEAUTIFIED YOU IN THIS PAINTING.
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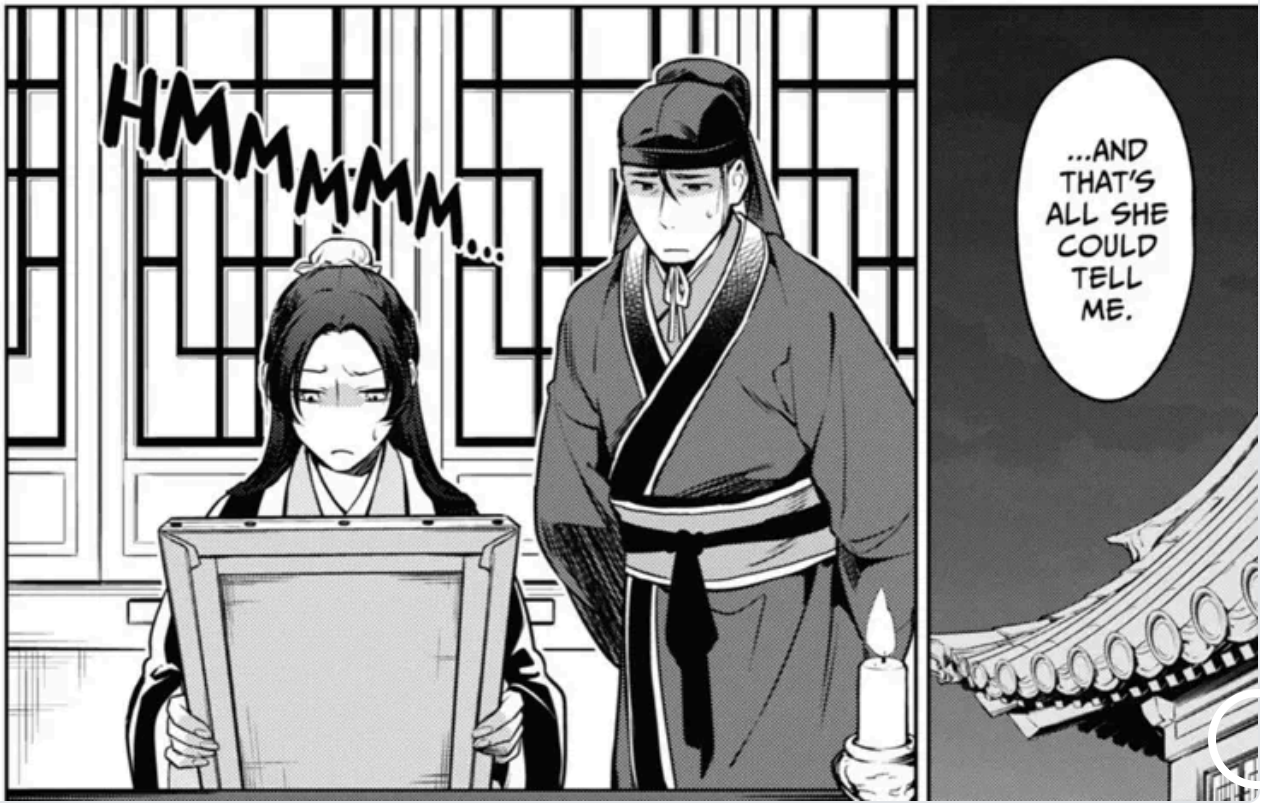
...BUT HE HAD THIS DELIVERED TO ME VIA MERCHANT CARAVAN.
MISTER ENVOY NEVER SET FOOT IN THIS LAND AGAIN...
YOU SAY SOME-THIN'?
NEVER MIND.
GRR.
WHY IS IT THAT HE WAS SO TAKEN WITH YOU?
ALL YOU DID WAS YOUR JOB AS USUAL, RIGHT?
.....
FWOOOO...
I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA MYSELF.

WHILE IT'S TRUE SHE WAS POPULAR IN HER TIME...
THE OLD LADY IS GOOD AT BEING OBJECTIVE.
...THE REASON SOMEONE WOULD IDOLIZE HER TO SUCH AN EXTENT...
...REMAINS A MYSTERY EVEN TO HER.


HMMMMMM...
...AND THAT'S ALL SHE COULD TELL ME.

YES.
I THINK IT'LL BE HARD TO FIND A TALL, BEAUTIFUL WOMAN WHO LOOKS JUST LIKE THE PAINTING.
IN THE MEANTIME, SHALL I TRY TO SEEK OUT A WOMAN WHO RESEMBLES THIS?

...BUT BACK THEN, GRANNY WAS 175 CENTIMETERS TALL.
SHE'S SHRUNK QUITE A BIT...
...PERHAPS YOU COULD SIMPLY TRY TO FIND A WOMAN OF TALL STATURE?
EVEN IF THEY DON'T LOOK ALIKE...

...HER LONG ARMS AND LEGS LENT HER EVEN MORE PRESENCE.
YES. AND AS A TALENTED DANCER...
THAT'S QUITE TALL.

THERE ARE MORE THAN ONE OF THEM?
YES.
THEY'RE COUSINS WHO HAVE THE SAME GRAND-FATHER.
THE ENVOYS ARE ABOUT THAT TALL AS WELL, AREN'T THEY?
ENVOYS ...?
...IT MAKES IT SOUND AS IF THE LADIES ARE QUITE BEAUTIFUL THEM-SELVES.
WHEN HE PUTS IT THAT WAY...
I WONDER IF THEY LOOK LIKE CONSORT GYOKUYO, HERSELF A FOREIGNER FROM ANOTHER LAND.
THOSE ENVOYS ARE SURE TO TAKE ANYONE LESS THAN RAVISHING TO TASK.
BUT I DOUBT ANY TALL WOMAN WILL DO.
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TRYING TO CAPTURE THE SHADOW OF A BEAUTY FROM THE PAST IS A HIGH ENOUGH HURDLE.
AND WITH WOMEN JUDGING, THEY'LL BE HARSH WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT.
THIS PROJECT HAS JUST GOTTEN MUCH MORE DIFFICULT THAN IT WAS BEFORE.
THEY PROBABLY WON'T BE SATISFIED EVEN IF WE PRODUCE SOMEONE...
...WHO LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE THE PAINTING.
WHICH MEANS...
...WE REALLY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO FIND SOMEONE OVER 175 CENTIMETERS TALL...
...AND SO UNRIVALED IN BEAUTY THAT THEY HAVE THE POWER TO LEAVE EVEN OTHER BEAUTIFUL WOMEN...
... SPEECH-LESS.....

I KNOW JUST THE PERSON.
SOMEONE WHO'S PERFECT FOR THE JOB.
A GREAT BEAUTY WHO STANDS TALLER THAN 175 CENTI-METERS...
...IS RIGHT HERE IN THIS ROOM WITH US.

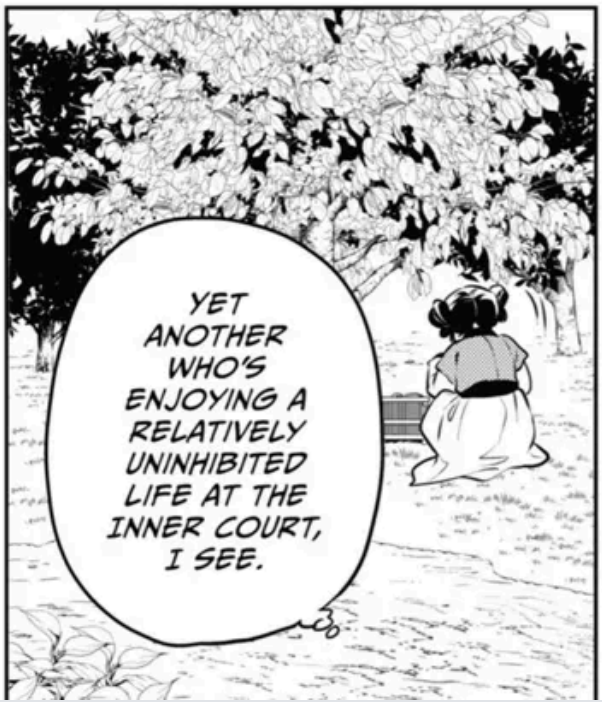
OOH!
!
STARE
じい…
?
WH...
WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT?

THE WILD PEACH ORCHARD ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE INNER COURT.
AN OLD, SHRINE-LIKE BUILDING NEARBY.
AND A POND.
I'M SURE THIS IS THE PLACE.
AND IT SEEMS SUITABLE FOR A BANQUET EVEN NOW.

YOO-HOO! GUESS WHOOO?!
GNUMP
SNEAK
THAT'S RIGHT!
...HI, SHISUI.
COULD YOU TELL FROM MY VOICE?
SHE'S SO FRIENDLY.
THAT'S XIAOLAN'S GOSSIP BUDDY FOR YOU.

JUST GOING FOR A LI'L STROLL.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, MAOMAO?
AND WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
NIBBLING ON SOME PEACHES, ARE WE?
OH YEAH?

NOT QUITE, THOUGH I DO HAVE BUSINESS HERE IN THE ORCHARD!
MWEE HEE HEE!


YET ANOTHER WHO'S ENJOYING A RELATIVELY UNINHIBITED LIFE AT THE INNER COURT, I SEE.

HANG ON A MINUTE!
DASH

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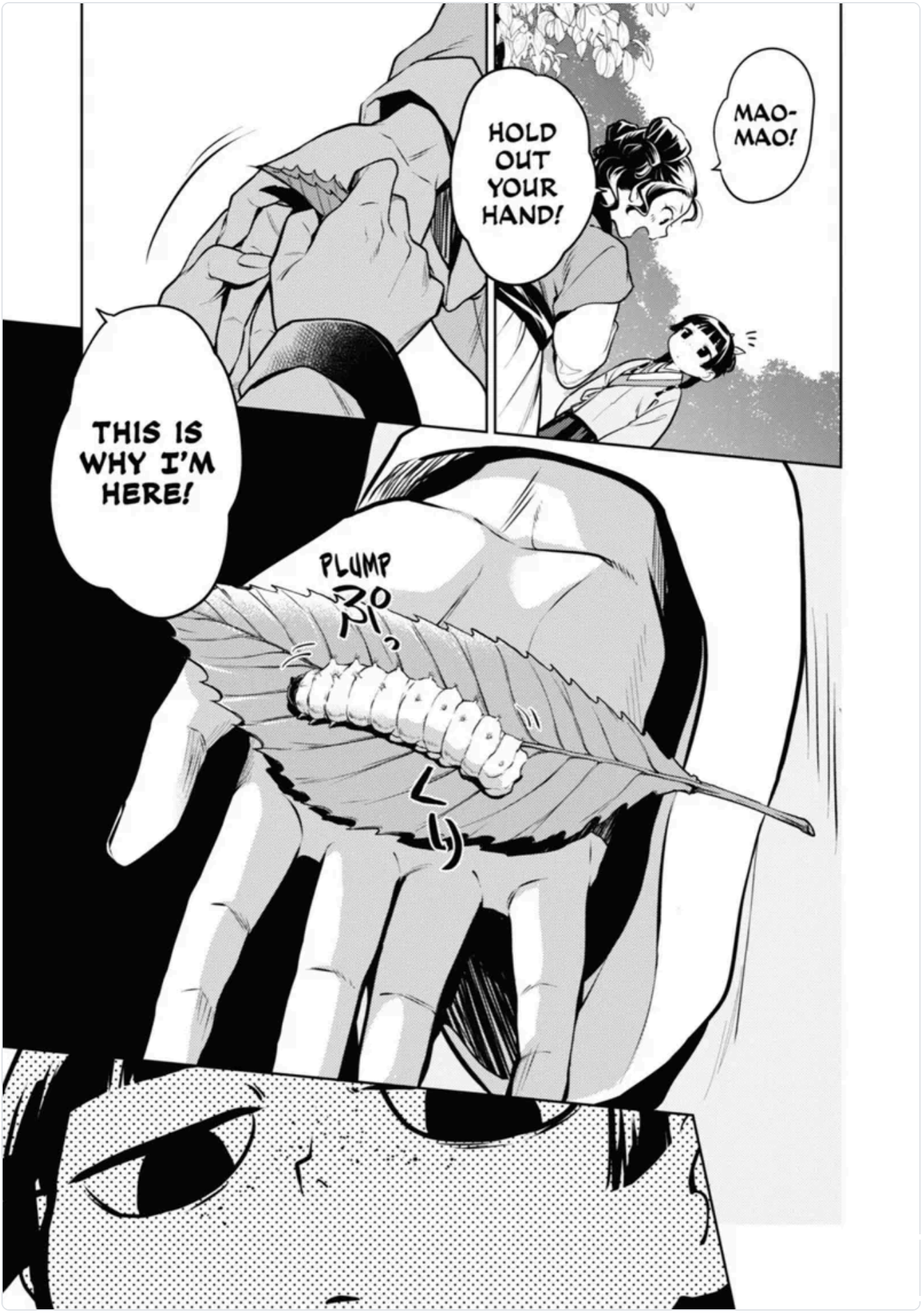

MAO-MAO!
HOLD OUT YOUR HAND!
THIS IS WHY I'M HERE!
PLUMP

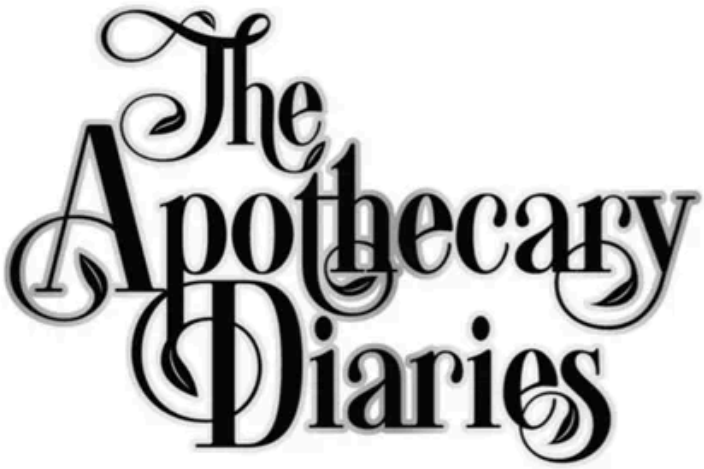
BEHAVIOR LIKE THIS IS NORMALLY CONSIDERED BULLYING...
...SO YOU MAY WANT TO AVOID DOING THIS KIND OF THING IN FUTURE.
AWW, REALLY?
BUT IT'S SO CUTE...
I CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO TELL YOU HOW AMAZING THIS PLACE IS.
SHE EVEN BROUGHT A CAGE FOR IT.
THIS LITTLE ONE TOO... I'VE ONLY EVER SEEN ITS KIND IN AN ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA!
I'VE FOUND HEAPS OF BUGS THAT I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE!
IT CROSSED THE SEA FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY TO GET HERE!
WOW, YOU DON'T SAY?

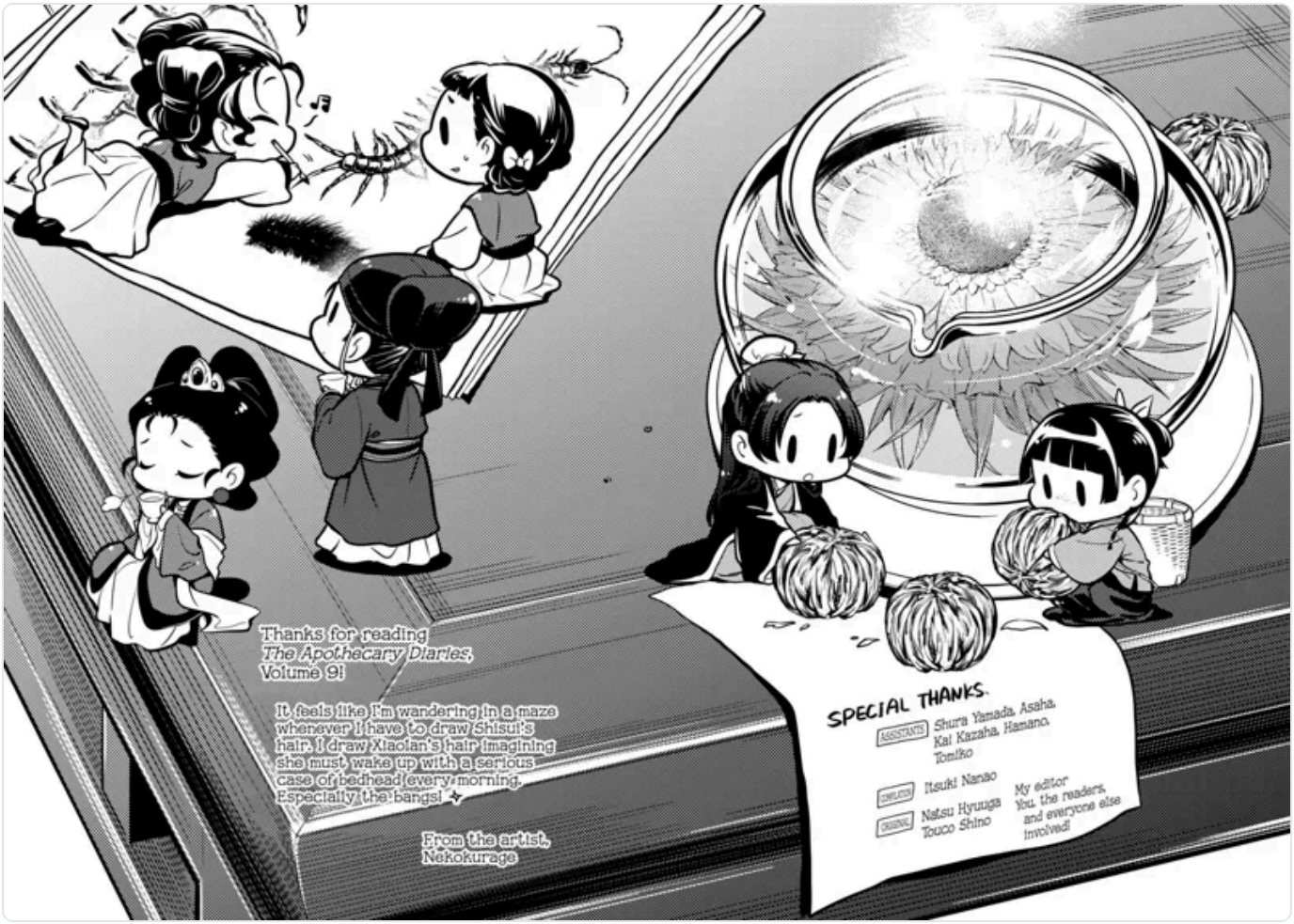
WILL IT TURN INTO A BUTTER-FLY?
A MOTH, ACTUALLY.
IT MUST'VE FOUND ITS WAY INTO OUR COUNTRY WITH FOREIGN CARGO...
IT HAILS FROM A NATION WE'VE LONG TRADED WITH.
...AND MADE ITS HOME HERE.
IT'S LIKE THEY GLOW WHEN THEY FLY AT NIGHT!
HUH...
THEY'RE NOCTURNAL, SO WE CAN'T SEE THEM NOW...
...BUT THEY'RE SO PRETTY WHEN THEY BECOME ADULTS.
THEY HAVE THESE BIG ANTENNAE, AND THEIR WINGS ARE ALL WHITE!

COME SEE THEM ONE EVENING, MAOMAO!
THEY FLIT ALL AROUND, ILLUMINATED BY MOONLIGHT...
IT MAKES YOU KINDA FEEL LIKE YOU'VE ACCIDENTALLY WANDERED INTO PARADISE!
PARADISE ...?
I THINK YOU MIGHT BE OVERSTATING THINGS.
.....
ONCE THEY EMERGE AS ADULTS, DO THESE MOTHS MATE RIGHT AWAY?
I... THINK SO?
I READ THAT AS SOON AS THEY MATURE, THEY CAN'T EAT ANYMORE...
...AND DIE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.

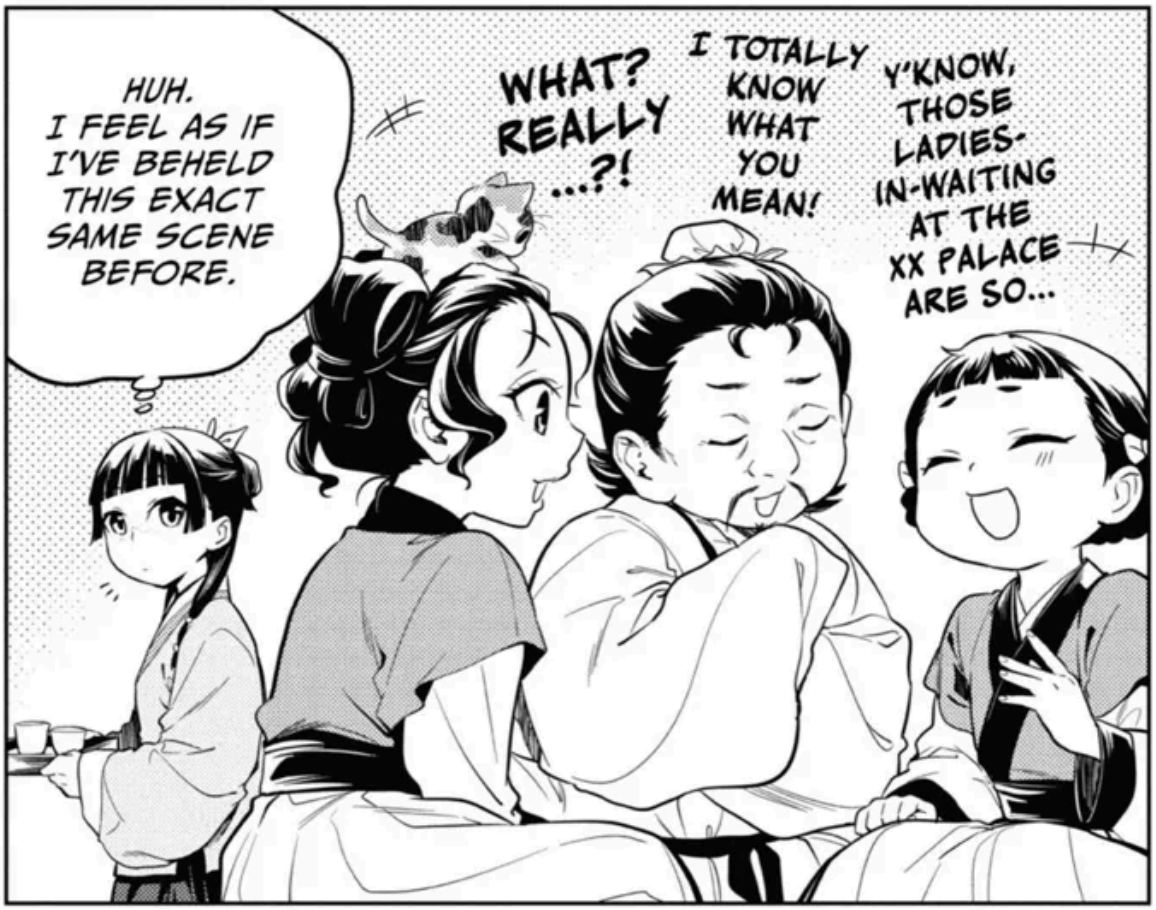
...HEY.
CAN YOU TELL THE MALES AND THE FEMALES APART?
?
YES, FOR THE MOST PART, I THINK.
GRAB
SHISUI!
I NEED YOUR HELP WITH SOME-THING!

...UH, OKAY.
MAO-MAO?
WE...
...MIGHT BE ABLE TO PULL THIS OFF, AFTER ALL!
THE APOTHECARY DIARIES 9 • End


The Apothecary Diaries


Thanks for reading
The Apothecary Diaries,
Volume 9!
It feels like I'm wandering in a maze whenever I have to draw Shisui's hair. I draw Xiaolan's hair imagining she must wake up with a serious case of bedhead every morning. Especially the bangs! ✧
From the artist,
Nekokurage
SPECIAL THANKS.
ASSISTANTS Shura Yamada, Asaha, Kai Kazaha, Hamano, Tomiko
ENGLISH Itsuki Nanao
DESIGNS Natsu Hyuuga, Touco Shino
My editor
You, the readers,
and everyone else
involved!

✧BIG THANKS AS ALWAYS✧
Author: Natsu Hyuuga
Light novel illustrator: Touco Shino
Manga artist: Nekokurage
The editor
You, the readers
See you in the next volume!
Compilation: Itsuki Nanao



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